

Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 AID-20 MC-02 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 OMB-01 EB-11 DRC-01 /171 W

----- 064159

R 092305Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5436

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

C1 '9/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 2866

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCSO

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3837

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS PFOR ES HO

SUBJ: SALVADORAN AIRCRAFT PURCHASE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 3769

SUMMARY. FONMIN BATRES EXPRESSES CONCERN THAT SALVADOR'S PURCHASE OF AIRCRAFT FROM ISRAEL MAY INDICATE BAD FAITH IN CURRENT PEACE TALKS. THIS CONCERN PROBABLY DERIVES FROM LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AS TO HOW MANY JET FIGHTERS MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THE ORDER. END SUMMARY.

1. AT BRIEF GET-TOGETHER AT HONDURAN AIR FORCE OFFICERS' IUB, IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THUNDERBIRD DISPLAY ON OCT 5, I HAD A CHAT WITH FONMIN CESAR BATRES. HE EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN OVER THE STORIES OF AIRPLANE PURCHASES BY EL SALVADOR AND SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND
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EITHER THE REASONS FOR THE PURCHASE OR THE TIMING. I ASKED

IF GOES FONMIN BORGONOVO HAD TOLD HIM ABOUT THIS DURING THEIR MEXICO TALKS. BATRES SAID THE SUBJECT NEVER CAME UP.

2. BATRES TOLD ME HE WAS ESPECIALLY PUZZLED SINCE HE UNDERSTOOD IN PAST YEARS ISRAEL HAD BEEN APPROACHED FOR SIMILAR SALES AND HAD REFUSED ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT DID NOT WANT ANY PROBLEMS WITH USG. HE ASKED ME DIRECTLY IF OUR GOVERNMENT HAD APPROVED OF THIS SALE. I TOLD HIM THAT I WAS UNAWARE OF ANY NECESSITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL TO CLEAR THIS PARTICULAR PURCHASE WITH US. AT THIS POINT BATRES TOLD ME THAT HE UNDERSTOOD OUR GOVERNMENT TO BE FOLLOWING A GENERAL POLICY OF MAINTAINING A BALANCE (EQUILIBRIO) IN ARMAMENT SALES TO HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR. HE CONCLUDED BY WONDERING OUT LOUD AT THE GOOD FAITH OF THE SALVADORANS IN THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT HONDURAN PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN GOH AND GOES.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY HAS HEARD MIXED HONDURAN REACTIONS TO NEWS OF AIRCRAFT PURCHASE. HOWEVER, GENERAL LOPEZ IS REPORTED TO HAVE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT MOLINA IS "PLAYING DIRTY", WHICH WOULD COINCIDE WITH BATRES' SUSPICIONS. AND BOTH THE ARMED FORCES G-2 AND G-4/5 HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER MATTER IN SERIOUS VEIN. G-4/5 (LT COL EDGARDO ANDINO LOPEZ) INDEED TOOK MAXIMUM ALARMIST VIEW TODAY, WHEN HE TOLD MILGP OFFICER THAT GOES HAD ORDERED TWENTY-FIVE JETS, OF WHICH THREE HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED (COULD HE BE REFERRING TO T-41S?. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS INTOLERABLE THREAT FOR GOH AND THAT ARMED FORCES WANTED TO PURCHASE TEN "RED EYE" MISSILES FROM USG AS COUNTERBALANCE. (WE ARE NOT YET TREATING THIS AS SERIOUS ORDER.)

4. TO EXTENT THIS APPREHENSION IS GENUINE, I THINK IT IS DUE TO UNCERTAINTY AS TO NUMBER AND TYPE OF JET FIGHTERS ACQUIRED IN REPORTED PURCHASE. WITH ONLY NINE-TEN CORSAIRS, AND THE A-37S WITH A TWO-YEAR LEAD TIME, THE HONDURANS WOULD HAVE GENUINE CAUSE FOR ALARM IF THEY THOUGHT THAT TWENTY-FIVE JET FIGHTERS WERE IMMINENTLY ARRIVING IN SALVADOR. BY NOW, THE YUGOSLAV TURNDOWN OF

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GOH ATTEMPT TO BUY F-86S WILL HAVE FURTHER REDUCED WHATEVER ORIGINAL EQUINIMITY THE GOH MIGHT ORIGINALLY HAVE HAD. (IT WILL ALSO CREATE RESENTMENT AGAINST USG.) GOH MIGHT FIND SITUATION MORE TOLERABLE IF THEY LEARNED THAT ONLY TEN-TWELVE FIGHTERS OF OLDER TYPE (OURAGANS OR MAGISTER FOUGAS) WERE INVOLVED.

5. IT IS OF COURSE NOW POSSIBLE THAT PRESIDENT MOLINA

MAY HAVE TOLD GENERAL LOPEZ ABOUT PURCHASE, SINCE THEY ARE REPORTED TO HAVE MET AGAIN LAST WEEKEND IN ESQUIPULAS, GUATEMALA. WHATEVER THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT, IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE THIS SUBJECT BEING AVOIDED.

6. GIVEN OUTCRY ON MATTER LOCALLY, IT IS PUZZLING THAT GOH HAS NOT PUBLICIZED ITS OWN PURCHASE OF A-37S.
SANCHEZ

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